

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Measuring Ingersoll.

MR. F. J. GOULD has written an appreciation of Ingersoll as Agnostic, Critic, and Prophet. He finds plenty of room for praise, and considerable need for reservation. But he writes with honesty, as well as with charming eloquence, and there is nothing in his criticism at which the most ardent admirers of Ingersoll should be offended. Whether his criticism is entirely sound is quite another question, and Mr. Gould will no doubt be prepared to learn that others may differ from him as much as he differs from Ingersoll.

Bradlaugh and Ingersoll are coupled together by Mr. Gould as the great Iconoclasts of the latter part of the nineteenth century, who completed with the tongue what Voltaire and Paine had begun with the pen. "They practically doomed the orthodox faith between them"—we presume Mr. Gould means in the English-speaking world. And what is the result? "Much work remains for Rationalism to do," Mr. Gould says, "but it can dispense with all anxiety as to the influence of the traditional creeds of Christendom." Well, if Bradlaugh and Ingersoll brought about this consummation, they have secured for themselves an historic immortality. And if their writings and speeches all perish—as Luther's have practically, for it is his Table Talk that has any real vitality left—they may be as sure as the great Protestant Reformer of a distinguished place in the muster-roll of human emancipation.

Mr. Gould is decisively of opinion that "the writings of neither will live long as literature." This assertion is easily made, but it can only be proved or disproved by time. It is literary prophecy, and every form of prophecy is dangerous. This much, at any rate, is certain, that neither Mr. Gould nor any other critic holds the key of the door that leads to posterity.

Bradlaugh was, by universal consent, a finer orator than a writer. His power on the platform was tremendous. He was a great aboriginal force in front of an audience. Ingersoll was a consummate orator too. That is admitted by friend and foe. His oratory, however, was of a different order from Bradlaugh's. He took great pains to prepare his orations, and often gave them a high literary form and finish, at least in special passages—which is, perhaps, all that can be said of the most famous orations from the time of Demosthenes down to the palmy days of parliamentary eloquence. His passages of "remarkable pathos and brilliance" give Mr. Gould the idea that he might have "made an eminent writer" if he had not stepped on the platform. He had "courage" and "lucidity" and "emotional vehemence," but the last quality, while a gain to him as an orator, was a "demerit in him as a critic of religious history." This may be true enough; we do not say that it is so or not; but we certainly say that it is nothing to the purpose. The point at issue is substantial and not literary. It is arguable that Shelley's emotional vehemence made him a bad critic of religious history, but how does this affect the question of whether he was a great poet? What is quite obvious is that Mr. Gould does not accept Ingersoll's view of the rôle and value of religion. He reproaches Ingersoll for treating it too much as a "superstition." "Religion," he says, "was a method by which the human mind, in its earlier stages, embodied its ethical, philosophical, and social speculations." But is this so true as to stand by its own strength? Ingersoll might have replied—he probably would have replied—that primitive religion had nothing

to do with ethics, philosophy, or sociology; that it was simply man's ignorant guesses as to the nature of the universe; that it did indeed get hitched on to truer ideas and more important interests, but that it did them incalculable damage by its impudent patronage. Ingersoll said, in a brilliant passage of his last lecture, that "the religion of the Puritan was an unadulterated curse." No, says Mr. Gould, it was not—"It had in it virile forces which assisted the development of a freer politics and civil life, and even helped the advance of Freethought." But could not Ingersoll have argued, as Hume argued before him, that this was an accident? Or, in other words, that the "virile forces" were not in the religion of the Puritan, although they happened to be in the Puritan himself. Perhaps we should say in some of the Puritans, for it was only the better and saner heads amongst those fanatics who had the least idea of principles that went beyond opposition to the Episcopal Church as savoring of Popery.

Mr. Gould's criticism of Ingersoll's crusade against the Bible seems to us a mere statement of personal difference. It is all very well to talk about the Bible as a natural "treasury" of this, that, and the other. Ingersoll would have differed from Mr. Gould as to the literary and ethical value of the Bible. It is so easy to exaggerate the human value of what we were trained to regard as divine, even when we have abandoned the belief in its divinity. Persons who no longer believe in the deity of Jesus Christ will often talk the most consummate nonsense about his unique character and his absolute perfection. This is the afterglow of the setting sun of their faith. And the same delusion prevails with respect to the Bible. When its inspiration is abandoned, it is still lauded as the greatest book in the world. Ingersoll did not think it so, and those who blame him in consequence should reflect that it is time, and not prophecy, which settles the final position of a dethroned god or a discarded revelation. But, in any case, it was not as a folk-loreist or a comparative mythologist that Ingersoll took to the platform. He took to it as a reformer. He assailed Bibliolatry. He attacked the veneration of the Bible as the Word of God. That was his work, and he did it splendidly. To say that he might have done something else is only to say that another man would have chosen a different task. There were many men who could bring out their closet tapers and shed a little light on the world. There was only one man who could radiate light with the royal munificence of a sun.

Ingersoll's work (Mr. Gould says) contains too much repetition, too much merely popular humor, and too much rhetorical ornament. The repetition must be admitted, but it was inevitable, and is not necessarily a demerit. To present one idea in a multitude of aspects is a sign of vast intellectual resources. Rhetorical ornament may be only an ill name for poetic expression. Popular humor may be the humor of universal humanity. There is popular humor in Shakespeare, and plenty of it in Burns. What is it, indeed, but the humor that appeals to all men irrespective of class and educational distinctions? Large individualities like Ingersoll do not care so much for the humor of cliques and coteries; they prefer the broader humor of the general world.

Mr. Gould admits that Ingersoll's style "frequently rises to the plane of prose-poetry." He praises the lecture on Shakespeare, but not (we think) with sufficient enthusiasm. Were we to play the prophet like Mr. Gould, we should say that this lecture is as sure of living as the finest Shakespeare criticisms of Lamb and

Coleridge. Without any prophecy at all, we may say that we could make a collection of wise, witty, and beautiful things from Ingersoll that it would be very hard to match from the writings of any of his contemporaries. He was not a preacher. He did not begin with firstly and end with seventeenthly. He took a subject and let his mind play freely upon it. And his mind was a poet's. He did not deal in abstractions. He had a grasp of the concrete. He saw the general in the particular. He brought in illustrations from all points of the compass. And this gave a splendid vitality to his utterances. Most men's minds, said Swift, will only bear one skimming. Ingersoll's mind was always rich in the cream of thought. His work was called destructive, but his genius was creative; and the world will have to rise to a much loftier level before it ceases to find nourishment and stimulus in his productions.

G. W. FOOTE.

Secularism and Social Remedies.

IN our recent article on "The Homes of the Poor" we drew attention to the condition of the poor in this country, and pointed out that the Church had failed to provide a remedy for existing social evils. We now allege that the true panacea for the wrongs from which our poor suffer is to be found in the application of the principles of Secularism, which prescribe natural remedies for all diseases. It is encouraging to know that, after years of apathy, the poor are beginning to understand what is necessary to advance their social status. They have learnt by experience that it is only by relying upon themselves, and wisely employing the best secular means at their command, that they can hope to attain their just position. In France, before Rousseau, in words of fire, aroused the laboring community of that country to a sense of their miserable surroundings, the poor were in a state of misery and degradation. Truly, history repeats itself.

Gustave Simonson, in his recently-published book, *A Plain Examination of Socialism*, writes: "Unfortunately, political economy, as it is now treated by publicists and professors, has become so clouded by masses of irrelevant erudition, undemonstrable theories, and unpractical abstractions that the few simple principles which really lie at the base of economic life are either brushed aside or simply ignored." This is equally true in reference to the social problems of to-day. The requirements of the poor to enable them to enjoy their fair share of the comforts of life are—healthy homes, opportunities for rational enjoyment, physical development, and mental culture. The attainment of these necessities has been so long retarded by "undemonstrable theories and unpractical abstractions"—or, in other words, by theological errors and class-made laws—that it is only within the last few years that the masses seem to have awakened to a sense of their wrongs, and to a consideration of the means to be adopted to remedy the evils engendered by the Church and by unjust laws.

This is not the place to deal with the subject from a political standpoint. It is the social aspect with which we are the more concerned. The Secularist who does not look properly after the affairs of this life is an anomaly and a paradox. To him this life is the only one that he knows anything of, and, therefore, his every energy should be devoted to making the best of it. The Secular remedy for improving the conditions of the poor is based upon the ability and desire to promote sanitation in every direction, the provision of pure air, pure water, pure food, and sufficient house-room for even the poorest classes. We must do our utmost to further, both in theory and practice, the doctrines of sociology, in order that the just relations of man to man and to society may be determined and established in fact, and that the present anarchy and hostility between the classes of the privileged and unprivileged may be destroyed and merged into a free and fraternal harmony. M. Zola's panacea for certain social evils deserves attention. In writing recently to the French disciples of Fourier, the brilliant novelist said:—

"From to-day one sure fact stands out and is proved.

It is that the justice of society depends on the reorganisation of labor, and that from this reorganisation alone will come a just division of the world's wealth. Fourier was the genial announcer of this truth. I have only taken it. The route matters little, for the future city of peace is at the end. At this very moment, in the present troubled and bitter times, the workmen's associations which are being formed, and which are at work, are the embryo of this future city. By the co-operation of production and consumption we are daily, step by step, marching towards that fraternal world which is laughed at."

There is much truth in these words; let us hope that that truth will be practically recognised at no distant date.

We have heard much of late about the housing problem, and no doubt upon its proper solution depends the social comfort of the poor. The great boast of Britain has ever been her homes, and nowhere are the domestic virtues found more prominent than in a well-regulated and efficiently-provided household. This fondness for the abode of the family circle is among the most striking traits in our national character. An English fire-side is a picture that cannot be too often painted or too closely studied, as the centre round which are grouped the feelings, sympathies, and affections that make a Briton's domicile, however humble it may be, the place where happiness reigns supreme. But, alas, thousands of our poor have to exist in such hovels that they never share in this national felicity. We are sometimes shocked in reading the reports of the sufferings and sacrifice of life on the battlefield, but the constant waste of life in the struggle for existence in the slums of our large cities goes on without any adequate attempt being made to remedy the appalling evil. Adults are borne down by misery and children die by thousands. Life upon life ebbs away; disease is fostered and spread; moral and physical degeneracy poison an ever-widening circle; and the grave claims the victims of overcrowding and insanitary evils.

The building of decent homes for the poor is no doubt thwarted with many difficulties; the more necessary, therefore, it is that serious attention should be given to the consideration of how such difficulties are to be removed. Personally we are in favor of giving greater effect to Part III. of the Housing Act, which provides for the acquirement of land for the erection of workmen's dwellings independently of any clearance scheme. The *Daily Telegraph* recently put the case thus:—

"The difficulties which the reformer has to face are numerous and obvious. The cost of land in the heart of great cities is enormous; the profits which flow into the pockets of the slum landlord are scandalously high, and there is no one more tenacious than he of the manifold advantages with which the law has unfortunately endowed him. The poor must live somewhere, but the inexorable laws of supply and demand have so forced up the rents of even the most wretched lodgings as to squeeze almost the last farthing from their lean purses. The wholesale demolition of small houses to make room for factories and workshops has been one of the most potent causes of the present acuteness of the housing problem..... There are untold thousands who must live near their places of employment, and thousands more who cannot afford even the cheapened railway rates. These must be decently housed if they are to become or remain respectable citizens, and the London County Council cannot be too highly praised for realising in so practical a way the moral obligations which rest upon them."

It appears to us that a remedial plan would be the revision of our land laws, the compulsory sale of land at a fair compensation, the erection of workmen's dwellings in rural districts, and the establishment of cheap railway rates. We attach great importance to rural dwellings because of the advantages of fresh air.

As to the question of general pauperism, Germany has a method of dealing with it which is more practical and successful than the English poor law. In the Rhine provinces the system adopted is a skilful combination of civic and individual activity. The town, for relief purposes, is divided into districts, each headed by a captain, under whom work a dozen or more "Helpers of the Poor." Every well-to-do citizen may be called upon to act as Helper for three years; as a matter of fact, many serve continuously, and the full number required is easily maintained. It is the duty of the Helper to be in close touch with the poor of his street or ward, to make full inquiry as to their need, to give temporary

relief where necessary, and to report all particulars at the fortnightly district meeting. The captains of the various districts form a central consultative body, together with certain representatives delegated by the City Council, and it is the Council itself which decides what proportion of the funds at its disposal shall be annually devoted to the relief of the poor. Here we have the nucleus of a system of wise benevolence radiating throughout the city. The Helpers are in touch at every point both with public institutions and with private charity.

It must not be overlooked that, whatever is done for the poor, they have duties themselves to perform. Apart from their physical, intellectual, and moral cultivation, they must practise frugality and self-restraint. Extravagance in any particular will sure to mar their success. Above all, large families should be avoided, for the obvious reason that too many children are not only a heavy tax upon the parents, but the chances are the offspring will not be trained and educated in a proper manner. While, therefore, Secularists would work to surround the poor with proper conditions, personal effort on their own part is absolutely necessary to secure domestic comfort and to fully realise the advantages of social justice and personal comfort.

CHARLES WATTS.

Atheism and its Critics.—II.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY'S treatment of Atheism is more elaborate, and, perhaps for that reason, more offensive. Speaking as to the class of people among whom he is to be placed, he repudiates association with Atheists, "For the problem of the ultimate cause of existence is one which seems to me to be hopelessly out of reach of my poor powers. Of all the senseless babble I have ever had occasion to read, the demonstrations of those philosophers who undertake to tell us about the nature of God would be the worst, if they were not surpassed by the still greater absurdities of the philosophers who try to prove that there is no God."* And, writing to a correspondent, he delivers the opinion that "Atheism is, on purely philosophical grounds, untenable. That there is no evidence of the existence of the God of the theologians is true enough; but strictly scientific reasoning can take us no further. When we know nothing we can neither affirm nor deny with propriety."†

It will be observed that both Spencer's and Huxley's repudiation of Atheism is based upon a misconception as to its nature. Both of them popularise the vulgar prejudice that Atheism seeks in some manner to explain the "ultimate cause of existence," whereas, as I have already pointed out, it has always been insisted upon by Atheists that such a proposition conveys no intelligible meaning, and, consequently, can admit of no answer. It is surprising that neither of the two recognised that the question of a First Cause, or of an "ultimate cause of existence," is strictly a Theistic question. I do not mean that the question may not be suggested to minds other than Theistic, but that, when it is raised clearly and definitely, it is seen to belong to that class of questions to which, under the present constitution of the human mind, no answer is possible. To the Theist, however, the question is involved in his general position. His theory is essentially one of final causes, his deity is postulated as the cause of existence, and he cannot surrender the question as hopeless without surrendering his position as no longer defensible. It is, of course, usual for the Theist to propound problems, which only arise from his own hypothesis, for his opponents to find answers to; but one might legitimately feel some surprise at finding *Theistic* difficulties saddled upon Atheism by avowed non-Theists. Atheism does *not* posit a final cause, and therefore is concerned neither with defending nor expounding such a doctrine. Theism necessarily does so, and, in arguing that it is absurd to express any opinion on such a subject, Professor Huxley is adducing a good reason against Theism, and to that extent

is fortifying the position he believes himself to be destroying.

Before discussing the relevancy of Professor Huxley's other objection to Atheism, that the Atheist denies the existence of God, it is necessary to say a word concerning the attitude of a section of the Freethought world on this question. Assuming for a moment the truth of the objection, one is at a loss to assign any reasonable grounds for the warmth of the disclaimer, or to account for the air of moral indignation against such as are supposed to indulge in such a horrible declaration. At most the denial of the existence of God is a logical error, and when we find certain people repudiating any connection with such a blunder, as though they were accused of associating with pickpockets, there is a valid excuse for imagining that at the back of this repudiation there is some little remnant of their old religious feelings still at work. It is reasonable, of course, for the Theist to regard the denial of the existence of God as a horrible proceeding, because to him it is the sin of sins, and right through the ages it has been treated as an unpardonable offence. But what reasonable ground is there for this show of moral indignation by the non-Theist? Is it anything more than a survival of the religious feelings, in spite of the religious belief being discarded?

But how far, and in what sense, is it true that the Atheist denies the existence of God? The essential weakness in all such discussions is the taking for granted that "God" conveys a definite and identical meaning to all people. This, it need hardly be said, is not the case. What a person means by God we cannot know until we have received a definition, and when we have received a definition, or have by some means arrived at some conclusion as to the meaning intended, then "God" may become the subject either of affirmation or of denial. Professor Huxley would have been the last to question the statement that the truth of any proposition may be denied so long as its terms involve a contradiction. That a circle may be square, or that two straight lines may enclose a space, are propositions the truth of which he would have denied off-hand, and this on the ground that the ideas of squareness and circularity, of straight lines, and an enclosed space, are mutually destructive—they cancel each other. It is on this ground that the existence of any special god is denied. When defined, it is seen that the attributes of this supposed God cancel each other as effectually as the qualities of a square circle would do; either this, or they are simply unthinkable. You cannot have an infinite personality any more than you can have a six-sided octagon, nor can you have an infinite intelligence without robbing the two terms of all definite meaning.

It is, indeed, of anything but small importance to note that both Theist and Agnostic do "deny" the existence of gods as readily as does any Atheist. No rational Agnostic would hesitate to deny the existence of Javeh, Jupiter, Allah, or Brahma. No educated Christian would hesitate to deny the existence of the gods of various savage tribes. Even believers in the current theology have evolved beyond the culture-stage of the primitive Christians, who accepted the reality of the existence of Pagan and savage deities, with the proviso that they were demons. It is no longer with any of the religions of the world a choice between rival deities, so much as deciding which god really exists out of the whole; and, save on the basis of a verbal quibble, no Christian would hesitate to deny the existence of Allah or Brahma, nor would a Brahmin feel any compunction in denying the existence of the Christian deity. It is a mere verbal juggle to say that these people only deny each other's conception of a deity. Each man's conception of God *is* his God, and to say that a being answering to his conception does not exist is to say that his God does not exist, and in relation to the God denied the denier is in exactly the position in which he places the Atheist.

So far, then, the Atheism of each is a question of degree or of relation. So far as Atheism involves the denial of deity, the Atheism of each religion becomes purely a question of degree. Each religion is Atheistic from the standpoint of every other religion, the affirmation of one god involving the denial of others. This really would seem to be the historical significance of the

* Lecture on "The Hypothesis that Animals are Automata."
† *Life and Letters*, by his son, vol. ii., p. 162.

phrase. The early Christians were called Atheists by their opponents, and the epithet was accepted by some without demur. Spinoza, Voltaire, Paine, and others, were also described as Atheists, and the description has lost its force, chiefly because the evolution of thought has broken down many religious barriers and is rapidly dividing people into those who profess a belief in *some* God and those who disbelieve in all.

Now, all that the present-day Atheist does is to go one step further than the ordinary religionist. The Christian Theist denies all gods but his own; the Atheist, seeing no more evidence for the existence of the Christian Deity than for the existence of the deities of other peoples, and seeing, further, that there are exactly the same contradictions involved in assuming his existence as in assuming the existence of Brahma, adds this one to the list of deities in whose existence he does not believe, and the possibility of whose existence he may logically deny. Atheism is, in this sense, a denial of the existence of *the* gods; but so is every Theism. The really distinguishing feature of a philosophic Atheism is its comprehensiveness; the ranking of all known deities—big and little, ancient and modern, savage and civilised, gross and subtle—as fundamentally upon the same level, springing from the same conditions, and subject to the same judgment.

But does Atheism deny the existence of any possible God? This question would be easy to answer if only one knew what it meant. It is easy enough to understand what is meant by "God," so long as any or all of the deities of the religious world are referred to; but what is meant by "a God"? Standing alone, it is a mere word, representing no definite idea and conveying no intelligible meaning.* Atheism does not deny the existence of a God, for the same reason that it does not deny the existence of Abracadabra—both terms mean as much, or as little. It is more than absurd for people who class themselves as Freethinkers to use the term "God" as though it had a perfectly assignable meaning apart from the gods of the different theologies. Professor Huxley, as we have seen, admits that "there is no evidence of the existence of the God of the theologians," and I imagine that he would have met the affirmation of their existence with a flat contradiction. At any rate, he would have been warranted by the strictest rules of logic in so doing. But when he asserts, with a show of logical precision, but in reality with grave looseness of speech, that "it is preposterous to assert that there is no God because He cannot be such as we think Him to be," he is using language to which no precise meaning can be ascribed. "God" is absolutely meaningless in such a connection, whereas the sentence—to be reasonable—implies that we have some conception answering to the term; and this, as has been pointed out with almost wearisome insistence, is not the case. It is not a matter of saying to the Theist: "I fully understand what is meant by your hypothesis; but, as at present I do not see enough evidence to convince me of its truth or to demonstrate its error, I must suspend judgment"; for we do *not* understand it, and, when we seek to, we discover that the terms of the proposition we are asked to accept refuse to be brought within the compass of a single conception. Suspended judgment is clearly out of place in such a connection, since it would imply some understanding of the question in suspense; and, it may also be added for what it is worth, denial and affirmation in the face of a proposition that conveys no meaning are plainly absurd.

It is true, then, that Atheism denies the existence of *the* gods, and does so on precisely the same grounds as it denies that $2 \times 2 = 5$, or that two straight lines may enclose a space. It is not true—or, rather, it is absurd—to say that Atheism denies the existence of a God, since the phrase is absolutely meaningless. Understanding, at least, is necessary before it can become the basis of either affirmation or of denial. In my next article I hope to deal with one or two questions that have been submitted to me by correspondents.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

* If, however, by "God" a universal or governing intelligence is intended, then, as will be shown later, this can only be done by robbing the term "intelligence" of all known meaning and significance.

The Church and the People.

THE *Christian Age* publishes a sermon by the Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis, D.D., on "The Church and the Common People." The title is not a happy one, because it is open to a different interpretation than that which Dr. Hillis probably placed upon it when using it. The "common people" sounds too much like a term of disparagement, such as we might expect from that superior class known to Jeames as the "hupper suckles." There is, however, some degree of fitness in it; for whether the Gospel narratives are fact or fiction, or a mixture of both, they undoubtedly represent Christ as coming specially and exclusively to the common people.

He was one of them himself, according to the accounts given of him. His father was a carpenter, and he probably followed the same honest occupation. His disciples were of the poorest class. His Gospel was apparently intended solely for the needy. He promised them mansions in the sky, to recompense them for the hardship of their lot on earth. Perhaps he really thought that in some imagined hereafter they would be exalted, whilst the rich would be flouted, and sent empty away. He was full of denunciations of the wealthy, and when rich men sought him he offered them the bitter advice to "Sell all and give to the poor."

If there was any man at all at the back of the idealised conceptions of the Synoptics, and the entirely different portraiture by the author of the Fourth Gospel, it is clear that he was of a democratic turn of mind. He never could have imagined that, as a result of his teaching, and still more of Paul's energetic rhetoric, a Church would spring up, and in the course of centuries assume the aspects and characteristics of the Christian Church of to-day. One of the best evidences that Christ is dead, and that all his assumptions of eternal life and almighty power were simply phases of religious mania, is the fact that he has never made any sign of his continued existence since the period when it is alleged that he soared aloft. Whilst on earth, and moving about in Galilee and Jerusalem, he was not always "meek and lowly." There were occasions when, if the Gospels may be believed, he became not only hot and angry and vituperative, but absolutely violent. This was so when he found "filthy lucre" associated with the approaches to the sacred Temple at Jerusalem. The outburst does not seem to have been entirely warranted by the circumstances. Still, he fired up, and struck out right and left, though the cause of the ebullition was trivial in the extreme.

What is he doing now? Nothing; though there are a thousand more incitements to interference at the present time than ever he dreamt of on the shores of Galilee or in the shades of the Jerusalem tabernacle. What was the mere changing of money and selling of doves near the Temple compared to the mercenary spirit, the merciless greed, the lust of gain, the avarice, and unblushing worship of Mammon in the present day? And this not by the ungodly and unregenerate in the outer and wicked world, but by the priests of the Church, in the inmost recesses of the temples misnamed of Christ; in the very holy of holies—by Romanists, Protestants, and Dissenters alike—by popes and cardinals, archbishops and bishops, and the equally arrogant and avaricious leaders of Dissent. "The Devil is dead" is a refrain running through *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Now we feel that, beyond dispute, Christ is dead—supposing we stretch a point to the extent of believing that he ever lived. The so-called Christian Church is not Christ's Church; certainly it is not that of the people—the "common people"—whom Christ is represented as having come to save.

The "common people" may console themselves with the fact that they are largely the possessors of common sense, which has been aptly described as the "genius of humanity." They are not to be cajoled and flattered, any more than they are to be frightened, into an adherence to a colossal system which is a mockery of the teachings ascribed to Christ. What *has* the present-day Church in common with the "common people"? Absolutely nothing. Of course, the Church thinks it to its own interest to capture the multitudes, as politicians (on occasion) do their best to secure the working-class vote. Sometimes both castes—the sacerdotal and

the political—are able to rejoice in a haul of more or less unwilling captives; but these triumphs are of transitory importance. The same work has to be done over and over again, because—especially in connection with religious conversions—there is no intelligent, permanent conviction to form a solid basis.

It would be a libel on the vast bulk of the population to say that their distaste for the Church—established or Dissenting—is founded on mere apathy or ignorance. In these days of general diffusion of knowledge a deeper-seated cause must be looked for. Everything points to the fact that the masses—whose absence from places of worship is the subject of so much parsonic lamentation—remain aloof because they have a more or less definitely-formed disbelief in either the necessity or the honesty of church and chapel teaching. In many cases this distaste finds intelligent and emphatic expression. In perhaps many more it does not present itself in open repudiation and argument. But all the same it is deep-rooted, and is none the less intelligent because its outward manifestation is a cold silence and an unassenting toleration.

The democracy will never be reconciled to any Church which teaches one thing and practises exactly the opposite. It will never be able to associate purple and fine linen, episcopal mitres and croziers, gorgeous vestments, extravagant stipends and emoluments, palatial abodes, equipages and retinues of servants, with the gospel of the poor vagrant Nazarene who specially, and with unmistakable emphasis, denounced such counterparts of them as presented themselves to his view in the days in which he lived. Either he was wrong, or his so-called representatives of to-day are wrong. There is no escape from this. It is so clear, and the inconsistency is so glaring and notorious, that even the commonest of the "common people" perceive it, and, naturally enough, are disgusted with it.

Dr. Hillis, in his sermon, seems to recognise in labor leaders—or, at any rate, in many of them—the natural foes of the so-called Christian Church. Therefore, he tries to cast some odium on them—but quite unsuccessfully. He says: "Many years ago I was in close touch with such a leader." Note the "many years ago"; that is a fine check to verification and correction. The story he is going to tell may be true or false, but preachers are known to lie so much for the mere sake of illustration that one has doubts—especially when no names are given, and it was all "many years ago." Dr. Hillis says: "He was an Atheist, a Communist, and frankly told me that he could not, in time of strike, be embarrassed by the Ten Commandments." Now we can be perfectly sure that no Atheistic labor leader ever told him anything of the sort. It was a silly thing for a labor leader to say to anyone, and especially to a sky-pilot, who would be sure to misrepresent it. It is so obviously open to misconception. It might mean—as Dr. Hillis no doubt intended it to mean when he trotted it out to get a thrill from his audience—that this labor leader, "in time of strike," cared nothing for the commandments against killing and stealing and coveting. But the labor leader, as "a good man and true," would be specially careful, "in time of strike," to enforce on his men these very elementary ethics which do not belong to the Ten Commandments alone, but are the ABC of communal security.

As Dr. Hillis appears to attach so much importance to the crude Sinaitical code—even to the extent of attempting to palm off a quite too incredible story in relation to it, a word or two may be devoted to that subject. Early religious instruction must count for something, for in any military club they will tell you straight off, without any reflective glances at the ceiling, what is the Seventh Commandment. Some lanky subalterns can "spot" the Fifth Commandment. They honor their fathers and mothers, and *quid pro quo* expect their bills to be honored. *Au reste* there is uncertainty or vacuity. "Some tommy rot about graven images and coveting your neighbor's ass." Apart from two or three inevitable injunctions, in no way requiring all the thunders of Jove, there is nothing remarkable about the Ten Commandments. Exodus xx. commences: "And God spake all these words saying: I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage." There is no absolute proof that the Israelites ever were in Egypt, but, apart from that,

is it not obvious that these Commandments were addressed, or supposed to be addressed, to the Hebrews in the desert? What have they to do with us? The next statement is quite enough to show the kind of Deity these people had:—

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

"And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Now will Dr. Hillis, leaving the labor leaders alone for a time, tell us honestly what he thinks of the above? Or one would appeal to a wider and more impartial audience, and ask: Is it possible to conceive a more contemptible caricature than this of a Supreme Being who *might* be supposed to rule the universe?

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Fact of Death.

It has been often remarked in these columns that there is nothing terrible in death, in the mere cessation of functions—that death, in fact, is "as natural as life." But such an explanation does not satisfy the vanity of humankind, does not appease its "spiritual yearnings." It is the very idea of ceasing to exist that is so repugnant. Death is the supreme adversary of man's natural egotism. He feels himself to be so great in potency, and death makes him so mean.

It is a common mistake to assume that our acts are the result of our convictions. The truth is that, with most of us, ideas are the outcome of habits. Given a habit, it is easy to fabricate a reason; and, given this universal habit of egotism, the denial of the unwelcome fact of extinction follows in logical sequence.

Every Christian, everyone who believes in immortality in any form—and what superstitionist does not?—denies death. The priest stands before the lifeless body, and declares that the man still lives. The audacity of the lie in presence of the Fact is ignored; and, compelled by the strongest of all motives, *the wish to believe*, his dupes believe it.

Every Christian denies death as regards himself, without perceiving any reason to apply the principle universally. The leaf withers and falls—it is dead. So with the bird, the fish, his fellow-mammals even—they are dead. But man passes through precisely the same stages of decay; he ends in precisely the same manner—and the Christian asserts that the corpse lives. That is his assumption, in plain terms.

The idea of immortality forms the bed-rock of nearly every superstition. This preposterous falsehood is not only the foundation of "the truth as it is in Jesus." Religious "truth" everywhere resolves itself into that obvious lie. God, the Devil, and the attendant angels are mere appendages—mere devices to keep the lie in countenance. No superstitionist really cares a brass button for these things; and when he says his prayers it is only with an eye to the perpetuation of himself. Purgatory or paradise, heaven or hunting-grounds—it matters not; they are only forms of one thing, the local dressings of the universal falsehood. The devotee may discard his own dressings, and assume others (this is called "conversion," or "apostasy," as the case may be), but he retains the essence of them all.

But does this widespread delusion stand the supreme test? Does the Christian hold it as firmly as ever at the death-bed of his friend? No; it is there that the foolish pretence breaks down, and the truth he has so long and carefully shunned is forced upon him at last; and he *knows* that never again will he hear the voice he loved. It is this consciousness that causes his otherwise unaccountable grief. Instead of the consolation promised by faith, he experiences the sorrow imposed by reason.

And when his own turn comes, how does he face the Fact then? Is he so strong in his conviction that he can die serenely and alone? Does he never require the presence of his medicine-man to fan his waning faith, and lull into quiescence his growing doubts? And even when he has such aids, are they not frequently without avail, and do not the words of the priest sound in his ears only as the hypocritical mumblings of an intolerable mockery?

But, if most believers die sceptics, we must conclude from Christian authority that most sceptics die believers. Whence, otherwise, the stories of infidel death-beds? Obviously, one cannot express fear of something in which he does not believe. If Atheists die calling upon God for mercy, they must die believing. But, of course, they do nothing so absurd. They have honestly faced the Fact, and accepted it; and the reality does not find them unprepared.

It cannot, however, be denied that many Freethinkers have been too conciliatory on the question of a future life. The plaintive and somewhat fatuous phrase, "*We do not know*," has become nauseous by frequent repetition. The plain fact is, that we *do* know, with as much certainty as we know that two and two make four, that death is the end. We are told that there *may* exist another condition of things in which life can exist apart from organism. Exactly; and there *may* exist another system of arithmetic by which two and two make five. But we have to deal with things as we know them, as they actually are; and it is worse than idle to speculate upon what might happen if they were different.

The late Colonel Ingersoll, so thorough-going a sceptic where Bible narratives were concerned, never appeared to recognise the sinister influence of this dogma. At times he seemed almost timorous on the subject. "We do not know," he said, "whether the grave is the end of this life or the door of another, or whether the night here is not somewhere else a dawn." It is, indeed, sad to see the doughty Colonel thus playing his opponents' game, and going out of his way to suggest even the possibility of "a dawn" in a vague "somewhere else." The priests have done that from all time—but Ingersoll! No doubt he knew perfectly well that no shadow of evidence existed to justify any such idea. But he did not perceive that the groundless hope he nursed with so mistaken a tenderness was the root of all the creeds.

But immortality in the mouth of the priest is not merely a pleasant dream—it is an assured certainty. He tells the lie with an unmoved countenance; he has told it so often! Perhaps he has even come to believe it himself.

Surely there is nothing more loathsome than the figure of the parson at the open grave—the incarnate falsehood in presence of the Fact. Have you ever observed the prevalence of rats in cemeteries? They are always there—large, sleek, and glossy. They can burrow underground, and make their way through an inch of English elm. Enough! The subject is too gruesome; but it suggests a parallel.

It suggests the prevalence of parsons in grave-yards. They are large, sleek, and glossy; and each poor inert corpse helps to make them so, contributes its quota to the clerical cash-box, which holds the proceeds of many larger boxes. These contain the used-up producers of parsonic wealth. But the parson's box is of greater durability, for the better protection of its more valuable contents.

Freethought has labored long and manfully, and its fruits are apparent everywhere. It is good to reduce God to a myth, Christ to a figment, and the Bible to a record of ancient folly. But it is still better to combat the root-idea, to which all these things are subsidiary, in which they have their being. Freethought has insisted upon the supremacy of reason, and has thus prepared the way for further efforts. The time is ripe to declare, with no uncertain voice, the falsehood of immortality and the Fact of death.

E. R. WOODWARD.

The blood on the hands of the king
And the lie at the lips of the priest.

—Swinburne.

"Spirit of Freedom!"

SPIRIT of Freedom! thou
By man most needed now,
When Mammon rules, and white slaves deem they
are free;
O speed the happier time
When hate and fear and crime,
Like evil dreams, at love's new dawn shall flee.
O speed the hour when fire and sword—
Hell's agents used in war—shall be abhorred!

Thy kingdom come on earth,
When heart and brain's true worth—
Not wealth and chance of birth—shall rule all
things!
Thy will be done, when man,
Freed from life's social ban,
Shall reap the fruits now given to drones and kings—
When none shall have the power to break
The hearts of those who toil for love's dear sake!

Bid man awake, arise,
By human wrong made wise;
Bid man shake off the errors of each hour;
Bid men to see and know
Within their midst the foe;
Within their hearts the weakness and the power
Self-love their weakness, and firm will
The strength, that yet misused makes tyrants still!

Let all false gods be hurled
Down to the dust—the world
Still lies within the shadow of their night;
And let thy smile benign,
Sweet Liberty, outshine,
That men at last may live within the light—
Till love alone with bonds shall bind
In holy brotherhood all humankind!

J. A. BELLCHAMBERS.

Acid Drops.

METHODISM in Ireland is not a progressing cause. Its Annual Conference has just been held, and a financial falling-off is reported all round. The Reserve Fund has been diminished, Special Donations have decreased, and there is a debt of over £39,000 in connection with Chapel and Trust Affairs. We take it that the Irish are superstitious, but quick-witted. Catholicism suits them as far as they want religion, but they see through the solemn absurdities of Methodism.

Dr. Allen, the Methodist President in Ireland, in his ordination charge, referred to the Higher Criticism. "By adaptation and restatement of Christian Evidence," he said, "our experts will be able to meet the critics and defeat them on their own ground." Restatement is probably a euphemism for misstatement. The law of gravitation doesn't require restatement once in a century. That is a peculiarity of the truths revealed by Omniscience. There is more stability about the teachings of Newton than about those of God Almighty.

"Providence" is going it with the weather in America. The thermometer has been registering from 90 to 100 in the shade. Prostration, deaths, suicides, and murders are the inevitable result. People have had to lie about in the streets panting for breath. Perhaps this is a sort of training for them in view of the establishment so many have to reside in when they are dead, but it is decidedly unpleasant during the present life for all that.

The Egypt Exploration Fund exhibition contains some jewellery belonging to the period of the Kings of the First Dynasty, approximately from 4715 to 4514 B.C. According to the chronology of the Bible, this was from five hundred to seven hundred years before the creation of Adam. There were ladies in Egypt wearing costly and artistic ornaments before Mrs. Eve wore so much as a fig-leaf in the Garden of Eden.

"My child," asked the French priest, "how many sacraments are there?" "There are none left," the child replied; "my grandmother had the last sacrament yesterday."

A certain minister, during his discourse one Sabbath morning, said: "In each blade of grass there is a sermon." The following day one of his flock discovered the good man pushing a lawn-mower about his yard, and paused to say: "Well, parson, I'm glad to see you engaged in cutting your sermons short." This little story might be commended to the

consideration of the Bishop of Norwich, who seems to desire that sermons should be long.

There is the story of the Harrow Master who preached a printed sermon without reading it beforehand. By bad luck, it turned out to be Henry Martyn's farewell, beginning, "When next you assemble within these hallowed walls, he who now addresses you will be on the bosom of the deep"; whereon a rumor ran through the delighted school that "Old S. was bolting from his creditors."

The "unco guid" are about the ears of Rudyard Kipling. They would sting him if they could. The other week he contributed to the *Spectator* an account of a village rifle club. After discussing the utility of the Club, he ended with the exclamation: "But if only the range could be open on Sundays!"

Now one of the bigoted Sabbatarian journals is down upon Kipling. "This is," it says, "only one of many evidences of a determined attempt to alter the character of the British Sunday, and we regret that the *Spectator* (which advocated this idea some months ago) should be the vehicle of Mr. Kipling's wish. The enormous increase in Sunday travelling; the popularity of Sunday cycling, which has destroyed the rest and quiet of countless villages and towns; and the laxity in attending Divine worship, are sufficiently serious menaces to our Christian national life, without the addition of rifle-ranges open on Sunday."

Ah, "the laxity in attending Divine worship"—that's where the soreness comes in. If people would but attend in their multitudes and bow the knee, and make pretence of listening to the men of God, and offer them reverence and something substantial for the offertory, we shouldn't hear so much about Sabbath desecration. The Anglican priests—of Established and Dissenting Churches, for they are all alike—would be as complacent as their *confrères* on the Continent. But John Bull in the bulk does not feel inclined to be either fool or hypocrite. And so the sky-pilots cry out that God is slighted, when really all that has occurred is that the sky-pilots are afraid that their occupation is going, and will eventually be gone.

Scenes take place each Sunday at Dunoon owing to the refusal of the local authorities to permit Glasgow trippers to land at the pier in the ordinary way from excursion steamers. On Sunday specially-constructed steps, carried by a steamer, enabled those who desired to land and scale the spiked barriers which surrounded the pier.

The *Record* regards it as an absolute certainty that, in due course, the "fatal opulence of the bishops" will be modified by financial readjustment. The circumstances of the episcopal office create a gulf between bishops and clergy which is only bridged over in rare cases. The bishops had better look out. There are signs of internal revolt at their palaces and emoluments. Hundreds of hungry curates and minor clerics—with large families and small abilities—are bent on a more general division of the loaves and fishes. And when the man of God gets on the war-path for shekels, even the sanctity of the episcopal office may not be spared.

Dull and lazy clerics are fast disgusting even members of the so-called Church of England amongst whom they are planted. They have apparently accepted, as shadowing out their own position, one of the similes attributed to Christ. They "toil not, neither do they spin."

A correspondent of the *Christian World* makes the following statement: "In some of the villages of East Anglia it would seem the inhabitants are not overdone with religious instruction by the vicars. I spent last Sunday in a village, and made my way to the parish church in the morning. The service went at a good rate. I did my best, but failed to keep up with it. We began soon after eleven, and were all out at a quarter to twelve. Instead of a sermon we had the Commandments. I expressed a little surprise at the brevity of the service, and was told that not long ago the same vicar got right through the service and the congregation were out in twelve minutes. In that case a much more frequent worshipper utterly failed to catch up to the express vicar. My hostess told me they were never sure of what they were going to have."

The *Modern Preacher's Guide* is the title of a recently published work. Honestly we can't say that it does not supply a want. On the contrary, we think something of the sort is sadly needed, for there seems to be little inspiration nowadays from the Holy Ghost, who appears to be resting. The days of the Pentecost are over. The author says that "General Booth is the most successful preacher of the century." Judging by results, we agree with the author, however much Dean Farrar, Canon Gore, and Dr. Parker may resent the selection.

"Buffalo Bill's" daughter, Mrs. Cody Wetmore, has been

writing her father's life. Here is one of the stories she tells: "A missionary attached himself to the Wild West Show with the view of looking after the spiritual welfare of the stock company of Indians and half-breeds, but his first conversation with a certain Broncho Bill led him to throw up his mission. 'This is Mr. Broncho Bill, is it not?' began the missionary. 'Ya-as!' 'Where were you born?' 'Near Kit Bullard's mill, on Big Pigeon.' 'Religious parents, I suppose?' 'Ya-as!' 'What is your denomination?' 'My what?' 'Your denomination.' 'Oh—ah—ya-as! Smith and Wessen'—meaning the revolver in his hip pocket."

A novel census taken at Greenock shows that the Church is quite unable to compete with the public-house. One Sunday 12,986 men, 5,269 women, and 2,533 children entered the 143 licensed premises during two hours; the attendance at the 45 services one Sunday was 4,666 men, 5,295 women, and 2,915 children, and, in addition, there were 141 men, 116 women, 1,248 boys, and 1,505 girls at the eleven meetings of the Working Boys' and Girls' Religious Society. Altogether 20,788 people visited the public-houses in two hours, compared with 14,375 visitors to religious services; and as compared with a census taken in 1882, when the population was 4,000 less, the decrease at public worship is 2,806.

If the public-house is so much preferred to the Gospel-shop—as according to these returns it seems to be—there are only two questions. Are the people shockingly wicked, or are the Gospel-shops hopelessly weak? The latter seems to account for all the lamentations. But, as a matter of fact, the solution of the problem is to be found in better sociological conditions.

A "sacrifice," indeed! An amusing story is being told by Willie James, in connection with the late fire which destroyed seven bed-rooms at his residence at West Dean. The little children of the steward, who lives close by on the estate, had been reading in their Bibles, the day before the conflagration, about the sacrificial acts performed by the high priests. At five o'clock in the morning the sound of the fire-bell clanging forth into the night brought one of the children out of bed to see what was the matter. Pulling aside the blind and seeing the flames leaping up, the awakened youngster called out excitedly to his younger brother: "Quick, quick, here's a sacrifice! Do come!"

The Roman Catholic *Universe* takes Lord Curzon to task for telling the Mohammedan students and professors of the Aligarh College to "adhere to their own religion." This is a direct hit at the Christianising of the people of India, and the *Universe* rejoices to think it will be reprobated by Catholics and Protestants alike. Why, certainly.

Rev. A. J. Harrison, M.A., who will be remembered as a friendly antagonist of leading Freethinkers—especially Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote—has published a book entitled *An Eventful Life*. He relinquished Methodism for the Established Church, and now he doesn't seem to know exactly where he is. For, after thirty years of work, he says: "Recent developments in connection with the 'English Church Union' have 'scared' me away from the High Church Party; the publication of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* leaves it uncertain whether the Broad Church has any distinctively Christian creed at all; and the Evangelicals as a whole have hardly as yet freed themselves from anti-Catholic prejudices." He may yet end where he began—a sceptic.

Rev. A. J. Harrison pays a splendid tribute to Mr. Bradlaugh, especially in regard to the Socratic debate at Birmingham. When Mr. Bradlaugh first met Mr. Harrison in the North, the rev. gentleman had fixed up the questions for debate in such a way as rather to tie the wings of the great Freethought advocate—who was very ill at the time. But in the debate in London on Christian Theism Mr. Bradlaugh "got all his own back," and more besides.

Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, writing of Mr. Carnegie's determination to be his own executor, says: "When he first formed this intention Mr. Carnegie was a decided Agnostic, and determined that no part of his money should ever be given for religious purposes. He was greatly under the influence of Mr. John Morley." It seems, however, that Mrs. Carnegie is very religious, and under her superintendence more than an hour is given every Sunday evening at Skibo Castle to worship and the singing of hymns. The feminine rule in this matter accounts for a great deal otherwise inexplicable.

Commenting on the absurd demand by the Bishop of Norwich for longer sermons, the *Rock* says very sensibly: "It is not so much the quantity as the quality of the average sermon that is at fault."

Sir Walter Besant, it seems, arrived at the conclusion, after reading *The Pilgrim's Progress*, that "Christianity does not want, and cannot have, a priest. I confess, he continues, that the discovery, by later reading, that the

so-called Christian priest is a personage borrowed from surrounding superstitions, and that the great ecclesiastical structure is entirely built by human hands, fills me with only a deeper gratitude to John Bunyan."

Reviewing a recently-published posthumous novel by Mrs. Lynn Linton, the *Church Times*, in a style somewhat indicative of a bemused condition, wonders: "Is it the blank, hopeless materialism of the author's creed which has misled her?" Something seems to have misled this pious reviewer. He may have been spiritually intoxicated by a visitation of the Holy Ghost, or the incense which he and his fellow High Churchmen delight in may have beclouded his intellect. Let him tell us how the author's materialism can be "blank" if it has a "creed." How can the affirmation of all that is solid and real be rationally described as blank? Is not that term more applicable to the antithesis of materialism—faith in the intangible? And what is there specially "hopeless" about the sum and substance of material existence which is not still more perceptible in regard to visionary views and idle dreams? If we must have "hope," whether baseless or otherwise, surely it is easy to imagine possibilities infinitely more attractive than anything that religious creeds have hitherto ventured to offer.

The dismay created by the *Encyclopædia Biblica* and Moffatt's *Historical New Testament* has by no means disappeared. The *Expositor* gives the first place in its contents to an article by the Rev. D. Smith, of Tulliallan, on this recent New Testament criticism. As we might have expected, he says, in so many words, "we have heard all this before"; then he says that the conclusions of these writers are "by no means final," and he condemns the spirit of the critics as "unscientific." All of which has the appearance of some sort of reply, but is, in reality, no reply at all.

The *Examiner*, on the same subject, comforts itself with the assurance that, after all, "there is not so much reason for grave uneasiness on account of the conclusions of these critics as many people seem to fear." At the same time, it mentions the case of a minister who frankly confessed to the *Examiner* writer that he was "afraid to open the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, fearing the effect it would have upon his faith."

Says the *Christian*: "Those who are tampering with the teachings of the leaders of the so-called Higher Criticism will do well to recognise that there is an inevitable position before them. To discredit the Bible is to discredit Christ, for Jesus himself constantly quoted the books of the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Samuel, the Books of Kings, Chronicles, the Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, and Malachi.....To doubt the veracity of the inspired Word of God is, therefore, to doubt the veracity of Christ. There is no escape from the difficulty."

Professor Frank D. Tubbs has just been removed from the Chair of Natural Sciences in the Wesleyan University, Kansas, for expressing his belief in the theory of evolution.

The *Church Review* recognises the general feebleness of pulpit oratory, and especially that which is inflicted on congregations by ecclesiastic fledglings. It says: "Few who are compelled to listen to many of our younger clergy when they preach can fail to recognise how urgent is the necessity of their reading more and preaching less. It is scarcely too much to say that the miserable preaching on the part of very many of the younger clergy of the day would not be tolerated for long in any other communion than our own.....To enter the pulpit and fill up fifteen or twenty minutes by repeating, in slightly varied form, a number of more or less involved sentences, may or may not be satisfactory to the preacher, but we know the feelings of the unhappy congregation who are compelled to listen to such a 'sermon.'"

A Belfast boy accompanied a Sabbath-school excursion to Donaghadee. Arriving at his destination, he fell between the train and platform. Both his legs were cut off, and he died in an hour. If such a fatality had occurred at a Free-thought outing, what would the religious papers have said?

The vicar of Thornton, near Blackpool, is the chairman of the local School Board. He seems to be a very meek and mild-mannered man. The other day he observed, at a Board meeting, that Mr. Moore, another member, belched forth falsehoods like Vesuvius gave forth fire. Another member, Mr. Bennett, brought forward resolutions, the wording of which, said the chairman, would make the schoolboys jeer, as containing expressions which deserved to go to a museum as curiosities. He also acted as bottle-holder to the Romish priests. Mr. Moore retaliated, describing the vicar as a disgrace to the place, who should have a millstone round his neck and be thrown into the sea. The vicar would sooner be sitting drinking tea than working for Almighty God.

The Rev. W. Watkins Lane, a clergyman, committed

suicide after acute depression following influenza. He took a dose of strychnine, and left a letter in which he said he could not endure the prolonged agony any longer.

A well-known resident of Gainsboro', named Charles Parkin, who has held high office in connection with the local Wesleyan body, has been committed for trial on a series of charges of gross indecency. When informed that his conduct would be brought before the Wesleyan superintendent, he wrote "hoping for Christ's sake to be forgiven." He also wrote that he was "leaving the matter in Higher Hands."

The vicar of Gorleston, who invited Mrs. Brown-Potter to give recitations in his church, observes in an explanatory statement: "The introduction of dramatic art ought to help the clergy. You know how the work of the Church suffers from mumbling and inaudible preachers."

John Edward Stoker, formerly a City missionary, was summoned at Worcester by Mr. Maund, solicitor and High Sheriff of the City, for assault. Two years ago Mr. Maund prosecuted Stoker for procuring a convict girl, and Stoker was sentenced to a long term of penal servitude. Afterwards he was liberated. Since then he has given Mr. Maund cause for complaint by frequent assaults. When Mr. Maund was riding in his volunteer artillery uniform in a civic procession, Stoker spat in his face and upon his uniform. Upon Stoker tendering an abject apology and paying the costs, however, he asked for the withdrawal of the case. The Bench consented, Stoker and his family starting for New Zealand that day.

"A Convert" writes: "It is rumored that the Christian Want-of-Evidence Society has received such gratifying testimonies to its manifold works in rescuing from the netherworld the abandoned and forlorn Atheist that it is about to circularise its very numerous supporters to discontinue their subscriptions—for a time, at any rate—as flood-time has come, and so rich has been the harvest in the London Parks and throughout the provinces that, until a new field of operations is arranged in the Uttermost Confines of the Earth, the Society's lecturers are really unemployed, and, temporarily, it is proposed to send them to Palestine to unearth souvenirs of their Savior. So let Atheists in the U. C. of the World beware! as what has been accomplished by the redoubtable champions of the Want-of-Fresh-Christian-Evidence-owing-to-all-that-available-having-been-used-up Society in the U. K. can be accomplished in the U. C. (Mind, Mr. Printer, this paragraph must not go in 'Acid Drops.')

Printer's Devil: "If I get tied up for another thousand years by Holy Joe I shall put this in 'Acid Drops,' as I believe it is writ 'sarkastick.'"

The *New York Journal*, an outspoken paper, which used often to report the latest sayings of Ingersoll, prints a lively leaderette on American Sabbatarianism, under the heading of "Our Nice Free Country":—"In Yonkers one solid, prosperous citizen got up and denounced Sunday golf playing. Another solid, prosperous citizen, who played golf on Sunday, was arrested, tried, and acquitted. At Yonkers now everybody who chooses plays golf on Sunday. But at Yonkers some ordinary citizens, not very prosperous, thought that they might play baseball, since the 'better class' were allowed to play golf. Their idea seemed reasonable. You play golf with a dozen or more curious clubs, and you travel a great many miles, sending a small rubber pill in front of you as you go. The game is notoriously conducive to profanity. Baseball is played with one kind of a club only, and a ball somewhat larger. It pleases young, energetic men, who prefer rushing around bases and sliding through the dust to a long, slow walk with a ten-year-old boy carrying a heavy load behind you. But the baseball players were soon disillusioned. As soon as they began their sacrilegious sport two of them were arrested, locked up, and finally released under bail of 200 dollars. At the same time golf was being played very near them. In the public park at Van Corlandt, on Sunday, two hundred golfers were playing peacefully. They were not molested. Several baseball teams gathered to play. They were warned off, and they went. The simple fact is that golf is permitted on Sunday because it is the game of prosperous people. Baseball is forbidden because those who play it on Sunday are mechanics or others not prosperous. Here is a comical spectacle in a country in which all are supposed to have the same rights. When a man who only on Sunday can amuse himself wants to play his game of ball on that day, he is locked up. If the man who can amuse himself every day in the week wants to play golf on Sunday, he is not disturbed."

The Rev. L. A. Banks, D.D. (Downy Deceiver), relates the "Conversion of a Freethinker" in the *Signal and Gospel Union Gazette*. It is a very silly story, quite beneath criticism. The name of the converted Freethinker is John Pate. It should have been John Fathead. He lives, or did live, somewhere in America. A long way off!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 7, N. S. S. Annual Excursion to Box Hill and Dorking.

To Correspondents.

ALL communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

G. HARLOW.—Many thanks. Miss Vance is writing you on the matter.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

S. HOLMAN.—Sorry we cannot use the verses. See paragraph for the other matter.

REGENT'S PARK DEMONSTRATION.—Miss Vance acknowledges 2s. from Archer B. Also 1s. from L. H. in Hyde Park.

THE correspondent who sends us a reply to Mr. Cohen gives his address, but has forgotten to give his name.

D. S. KERR.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. W. STRICKLAND.—Shall appear.

M. E. PEGG.—We hope the Manchester friends will have a good time with their picnic.

G. E. C. NAEWIGER.—Mr. Foote will try to visit Hull as suggested at the end of September or the beginning of October. Kindly drop him another line in due course, and keep an eye on the Hall you mention.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Much pleased to hear that your annual Demonstrations at Newcastle-on-Tyne have been so successful. You are evidently not dead there, though the enemy have been such a long time watching your funeral.

F. SMALLMAN.—We are obliged for the cutting. See "Acid Drops."

J. YOUNG.—Shall appear.

L. SIMPSON.—Freethinkers are, we know, lonely in many parts of the country without intellectual companionship. You have our sympathy, and we hope you will yet come across some congenial spirit.

R. BROWN.—Pleased to hear that the verses on "Jenkins, Christian" caused such merriment among your fellow workmen. Thanks for the cuttings. We have noticed the clerical whinnings in the *Daily Mail* over the poverty of the clergy. Nothing could be more hypocritical. Jesus said "Blessed be ye poor," and they want to escape the blessing. He said, "Woe unto you rich," and they want to earn the curse.

REV. Z. B. WOFFENDALE sends us a long letter in reply to Miss Vance's in last week's *Freethinker*. He devotes nearly the whole of it to an incidental reference, and only a few lines to the main question. Miss Vance did not invite, and does not want, a discussion with Mr. Woffendale on the subject of slavery in America. Nor do we particularly want illumination upon it from Mr. Woffendale, and we suspect our readers are of the same mind. "With regard to debating with you, sir, or with Mr. Charles Watts," he says, "I beg to refer you to Mr. Atkins, the excellent open-air chairman of the C. E. S., or to the letter of reply which I have recently forwarded to the secretary of the West Ham Secular Society." This may be very interesting, but it is very vague. A man who meant discussion would not "hedge" in this manner. We invite Mr. Woffendale to state plainly whether he is prepared to hold a public debate with a leading *Freethinker* on conditions to be arranged by a joint-committee.

F. G.—Many thanks for the extract. It will be very useful. We shall probably print it in our next issue. Your letter, also, is most welcome. It gives us great pleasure to hear from a recent recruit. We hope you will always retain your good opinion of the *Freethinker*.

FREDERICK RYAN.—Your valued article arrived too late for this week's issue. It will appear in our next.

STATIONER (Hull) asks whether there is "any truth in a statement a friend made to me the other day, that Watts, Ingersoll, and yourself believed in 'illicit love.'" We answer "No," if "illicit love" means promiscuous intercourse, or adultery, or sly attachments, or the destruction, as distinguished from the reform, of the institution of marriage. Freethought leaders are not fetched out of pigstyes and lunatic asylums. Our correspondent can show this reply to his "friend."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Benevolent Fund, W. McLean, 6s.; General Fund, J. Douglas, 2s. 6d.

W. GRIERSON.—Mr. Bradlaugh's defence, on his trial for Blasphemy, was technical, because the incriminating articles and pictures had appeared in the *Freethinker*, and he never had any sort of connection with this journal. He was included in the prosecution, of course, for political reasons. It was one of the many dirty means employed to bring him to grief. That it failed was a joy to all his friends, and to none more so than ourselves. Sir Hardinge Giffard, now Lord Halsbury, was capable of any dirty work against Bradlaugh. We mean legal dirty work, which is often the dirtiest of all.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Midland Daily Telegram—New York Public Opinion—Retford and Gainsborough News—Eastern Evening News—Freethought Ideal and Vindicator (Ottawa)—Lucifer (Chicago)—Yorkshire Evening Post—Weekly Times and Echo—Two Worlds—Kerry Sentinel—Progressive Thinker.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Very Personal.

SOME years ago I had an encounter with the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. I feel interested, therefore, in reading that some wealthy Wesleyans have bought and presented to him a country house in Surrey, to which he may retire for peace, quiet, and recuperation from the labors of his West London Mission. I do not envy him, because I believe he works hard, and his supporters ought not to let him work himself to death. He broke down some time ago, and had to go away for several months' holiday. Here again I have a certain sympathy with him. My own naturally strong constitution has been somewhat strained, and I have had a pretty clear warning in the shape of insomnia. This will not break down a constitution like mine in a hurry, but if it be not averted the break-down will be all the worse for that when it happens. My work and responsibilities are very exacting, and worry on the top of such work is apt to cause an intolerable burden. Well, of late I have been much worried, and I am only now free to speak about it. With the opportunity comes the necessity. If I do not speak out I shall be the victim of misunderstanding and misrepresentation; and, owing to the special circumstances of the case, this might also be to the detriment of the movement.

A present has been made to me. It is not a country house in Surrey, but something far less agreeable. A wealthy *Freethinker*, one who has just advertised the fact that he can spare £15,000 without inconvenience, has procured a receiving order against me in the Court of Bankruptcy. I fought every step of the way during months of litigation, but the technical advantage was on his side, and he has carried his point at last.

I have been President of the National Secular Society for eleven years and four months. During one year a feeble effort was made, at Mr. George Anderson's suggestion, to provide me an honorarium. Mr. Anderson sent a letter to the Bristol Conference, in 1895, through Mr. Robert Forder, without any prior consultation with me. The substance of that letter is given in the Conference report (*Freethinker*, June 9, 1895, p. 358):—

"Mr. Anderson said he had long felt that the President of the N. S. S. should be recouped for his loss of time and money in serving the party's interests. It was unfair that heavy burdens should be laid upon those who were doing such valuable work. Of course it might be said that Presidents had asked for nothing. But that was no answer. Mr. Bradlaugh had died several thousand pounds in debt, owing to this state of things. Christian congregations looked after the worldly wants of their ministers, and Secularists should do the same; and Mr. Anderson believed the congregation was large enough to do it. He hoped the Conference would appoint a committee to consider the matter and report upon it forthwith."

Messrs. Anderson, Forder, Watts, and Ward were appointed as a committee for this purpose. They

reported that the President should, as a start, be paid an honorarium of at least £100 per year. But they did not succeed in raising the full amount; and, as Mr. Anderson gave nothing himself the second year, and the fund was practically left for me to raise, I thought I should best consult my own dignity, and the dignity of all concerned, by letting the whole thing drop. Thus ended the episode of the President's honorarium. I recurred to the old order of unpaid service. I never charged the N. S. S. for out-of-pocket expenses—not even for postage stamps. Year after year I bore what Mr. Anderson called "heavy burdens." In 1897 what was called the Treasurer's Scheme was started. Mr. Hartmann proposed to raise £1,500 a year for the Society's work, out of which the President was to receive £250. It was a very large scheme, but the Conference accepted it, and I loyally supported it, though I was sure it would fail. Mr. Hartmann subscribed £50 himself. Other supporters of the movement were invited by circular to contribute. Mr. Anderson replied that Secularists would not support their own cause; they would take their President's services, for instance, but they took care to pay him nothing. This was not a very reasonable reply when it was proposed to do something in real earnest. It showed, however, that Mr. Anderson still appreciated the President's "heavy burdens."

How curious it is that this same Mr. Anderson should be the person, after further years of these "heavy burdens," to pursue me into the Bankruptcy Court. But such is the fact, and I mean to tell the whole story.

After the fire at the old *Freethinker* office, in 1886, I was practically penniless. Consequently I was obliged to borrow capital to carry on my business. What I obtained was sunk in a heavy stock of books and pamphlets, and in the *Freethinker*, which was then published at a penny, and on which there was a considerable weekly loss. I had increased its size from eight to twelve pages, and I afterwards increased it to sixteen. Its circulation kept improving, but my capital was insufficient to bear the loss until the turn of the tide. Several investors wanted their money back too soon. So many notices came in that it was like a run on a bank. I paid back a good deal of money by hook or by crook; and sometimes, in the haste to pay some their principal, I was unable to pay others their interest. The muddle would have been perfectly hopeless if it had not been for a bit of luck—one of those things that come once in a lifetime, and that your enemies talk about *all* your lifetime. I was thus enabled to reduce my indebtedness a good deal, but a fair amount remained, and the financial strain of the loss on the *Freethinker* still continued. At that time I gave Mr. Anderson, at his own request, a statement of my affairs, showing how many persons had put money into my business, and how much I had paid each of them back. It was a document of which I had no need to be ashamed. But I do not mention it for that reason. My object is to show that Mr. Anderson knew the state of my affairs, and the difficulties I had to encounter. He even sent out a circular to my creditors, begging their indulgence, and even suggesting that they might reduce their claims. One creditor generously replied with a writ; he had taken a slight at something, and he took that way of illustrating his appreciation of my services to the movement. Mr. Anderson said I was a fool to go on, that I should never live to pay all my creditors, and that I ought to get freedom in some way, even if it were in the Bankruptcy Court. I even went to the length of giving my solicitor the wherewithal to file my petition, but the document was not presented. "No," I said, "I will struggle on to the end; if somebody else makes me bankrupt I cannot help it, but it shall not be my own act." So I tore up the petition.

All this was *before* Mr. Anderson wrote that letter to the Bristol Conference about the President's "heavy burdens" and the necessity of relieving him, at least by allowing him something for his lost time and his inevitable expenses.

Mr. Anderson had not invested any money in my business as others had on a six-months' notice of withdrawal. He had, however, assisted me with advances. He saw what my "heavy burdens" were, and he came

to my help. I felt very grateful, and I am sorry that the moral obligation is now cancelled. It did not occur to me that he would ever try to make this a purely personal matter, or I would have protected myself. When, for instance, he offered me, quite unsolicited, a cheque for £150, if he had said to me, "I shall demand this back some day, and if you cannot pay me I shall hold myself at liberty to sue you, to distract on your home, to carry havoc into your family, and even to drive you into the Bankruptcy Court," I should have returned his cheque and wished him good-day. The "heavy burdens" I was bearing were really not personal. They were party burdens. I did not want money to buy my wife a bonnet, my children shoes, or myself a dinner. I wanted money to meet the obligations I had incurred as the leader—the elected leader—of the only definite Freethought party in Great Britain. I gave Mr. Anderson written acknowledgments of his advances, but I never took, and he never offered, a single receipt for any repayment; and this very fact shows that it was not a hard-and-fast matter of business between us.

That he "helped me" has of late been frequently asserted by Mr. Anderson. What that "help" was I have stated. There is an impression abroad that this is not all. This impression has been strengthened by an apparently inspired paragraph in another journal. I think it necessary, therefore, to say that this impression is quite erroneous. Beyond the advances referred to I have never had any money privately from Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson's advances, made at the time I refer to, between eight and ten years ago, amounted altogether to £300. There was a previous cheque for £75 which he gave me some time in 1886, before I became President of the N. S. S. I draw a distinction between that advance and the later ones. I had the money to promote work I was doing for the cause, it is true, but I was not then bearing the "heavy burdens." They rested at that time on Mr. Bradlaugh's shoulders.

It will thus be seen that £375 represents the sum-total of Mr. Anderson's advances. When I got a little breathing-time by increasing the price of the *Freethinker* to twopence, I repaid him £5 or £10 as I could. Nearly £70 in all. But the circulation of the *Freethinker* did not remain what it was, although, under the new conditions, it paid its way, instead of entailing a loss. Moreover, my expenses increased. I was bearing the "heavy burdens" still. There was also a depression in our movement, owing to the death of Mr. Bradlaugh and the defection of Mrs. Besant, and my platform earnings were considerably reduced. Then came the fresh "burden" of maintaining a platform in London after we lost the Hall of Science. Miss Vance can testify that I often spent my own earnings on other lecturers to keep the ball rolling. We had the Foresters' Hall, then Milton Hall, and finally the Athenæum Hall. For five years I have kept open a Sunday evening platform at the last place, and one £10 voted by the Board of the Secular Society, Limited, is all the assistance I have ever received. I have borne the entire responsibility. Whoever lectured there in my absence received a fee at least as large as he would have had elsewhere—sometimes much larger—whatever the size of the audience. I also saw to the Sunday Demonstrations in the open-air during the summer, when the Athenæum Hall was closed—with the rent going on. It was my duty to see that all the speakers at these Demonstrations were remunerated. But it did not occur to anybody that I should be recompensed; and I have never taken, or requested, a penny for any one of these great meetings. Not that I am boasting of my "generosity." I am merely explaining, now that the time has come for explanation.

Some people fancied I was making a fortune out of the *Freethinker* alone. Well, I will give them something to think over, for I am now past reticence. When my dear friend and colleague, Mr. Wheeler, died, I took his week's salary round to his widow. It was £2 10s., and I added another 10s., thinking she might want a little more for various reasons. Now that £3 was just 5s. more than the whole profit from that week's *Freethinker*. There was nothing for me; in fact, I was 5s. out of pocket, though I had done all the work—and as I look back I wonder how I did it. For a whole month I paid Mrs. Wheeler £2 10s. per week, and for two months after that £1 5s. per week. And I beg to say that they

lie who go about gossiping that this money, or a single penny of it, was deducted from the subscription I raised for her. But here again I am not boasting. I simply feel that the time has come to tell the truth. I want some people to understand what a fortune I was making, and how I spent it.

The year after my dear friend's death—I miss him still—I projected the Freethought Publishing Company. I had lost a gallant and steadfast comrade, I was getting older, the "heavy burdens" still remained, and I thought they should be better distributed. I had conversations with Mr. Anderson on the subject, and I showed him the draft of a circular I had prepared, in which he suggested some alterations. The circular was then printed, under date of June 21, 1899, and sent by post to a large number of Freethinkers. One paragraph ran as follows:—

"I have mentioned this matter privately to two friends. One of them, whose name I am not at liberty to disclose, is ready to invest two, three, or five hundred pounds in this project, according to circumstances. The other is Mr. George Anderson, whose name is well known to the Secular party. He also is ready to invest five hundred pounds, should the number of shares subscribed be sufficient."

Mr. Anderson now says that he does not believe he ever saw that printed circular. But he admits that I brought my "anonymous friend" up to his office, where they held a conversation on the projected Company in my presence. Nor is that all. I printed the substance of the preliminary circular in the *Freethinker* of July 16, with a list of the promises of support I had received up to date. Mr. Anderson's name headed the list for 500 £1 shares. That list, with additions as fresh promises came in, was printed conspicuously in the *Freethinker* for ten successive weeks with Mr. Anderson's name starting it every time. When the Articles of Association were drawn up and printed, Mr. Anderson's name appeared as one of the first Directors of the Company, and he signed the Articles with the other founders. The Company was then registered, and he became legally one of the first five Directors, his name immediately afterwards appearing as such in the Company's Prospectus, which was not only issued in a separate form, but published in the advertisement pages of the *Freethinker*.

It must be admitted, I think, that if Mr. Anderson did not give me the promise of support which I announced, I took a very open way of courting exposure. He never repudiated that promise at the time, when his repudiation would have had at least a *prima facie* validity. But he repudiates it now. And I think I may leave him, without a word of comment, to the judgment of my readers in general, and in particular to the judgment of those who saw his name in the list before they became Shareholders in the Freethought Publishing Company themselves.

Some time after the Company was started I spoke to Mr. Anderson about taking up his Shares. He did not then say "I never promised to take any," or "I never promised to take 500." What he said was that he would take Shares as I paid him money against his old advances. This was not unreasonable, so I paid him £50 in bank notes—taking no receipt, as usual, so implicit was my reliance upon him. To my surprise he took no Shares. A month later, as he said I had not made a sufficiently large payment, I handed him another £50. To my surprise he took no shares then. Weeks afterwards he applied for twenty-five. On hearing of this from the Secretary, I wrote to him, pointing out that at this rate I should have to pay him £2,000 before he could take the 500 promised shares. He did not reply. Nor has he applied for any more Shares from that day to this.

I must now explain that the £1,000 in cash for which I actually sold my business—payable in certain instalments—was not money that I could use as I pleased. I sold the business, but I kept the liabilities, which exceeded the £1,000. My expenses of formation came to nearly £100. Then again, I undertook to farm the *Freethinker* until the Company could find premises of its own, which it was unable to do until the following April; and, as Mr. Forder's breakdown nearly ruined the paper and everything else, I had next to nothing for myself for a whole half-year, during which

time I had to live on my own resources. There was a considerable account owing to my printer, which I discharged. Then my largest creditor, in the paper trade, with an eye on that £1,000, as though I had it intact, refused to listen to reason, and would accept no offer, nor even consent to join a meeting of creditors, with a view to dividing up my resources equitably. I frustrated him as far as I could, but I could not do so completely without appealing myself to the Bankruptcy Court. Mr. Anderson then joined in the hunt for that money. He talked about the £1,000, like the rest, as though it were separately available for each creditor. He took to threatening me, and finally set his solicitors at me. My own solicitors tackled them, and so the game went on, although it was clear that very little was to be got out of me in any case.

Had I not paid Mr. Anderson those two sums of £50—£100 in all—in order (as I say) that he might be able to take a proportionate number of Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, he could not have sued me at all; for the recovery of his old advances, even if they had been made on the commonest personal grounds, was barred by the Statute of Limitations. It was necessary for him to maintain that he never promised to take Shares, that my payments to him were absolutely on account of his old advances, and not to enable him to take the said Shares, and that by these payments I had taken the debt out of the Statute of Limitations, renewed it, and made it recoverable. Unfortunately, I did not receive his promise to take the Shares in writing, and it was therefore impossible to sustain his legal liability. Our intercourse at the time was so familiar that it would have been very odd if I had asked him for more than a verbal promise. Others also made verbal promises, and have redeemed them.

For a wealthy man, who can spare £15,000, Mr. Anderson displayed a curious generosity in his action. He sued me for £147 interest as well as the principal! By forcing the pace, his solicitors prevented the action from coming before a jury. They induced the Master in Chambers to make an order that I could defend the whole action by paying £200 into court; failing which, there would be judgment for £200, with leave to defend the remainder. This was a trap which I declined to walk into. The judgment for £200 was then proceeded with, leaving the suit for the £147 interest still pending; and in due course, after a stubborn fight by my solicitors, they got their receiving order (on Saturday, June 29) in the Bankruptcy Court. So I suppose I shall very shortly be made a bankrupt. For my pursuer is one who, on account of his wealth, has been used to deference and even subservience, and does not look with a kind eye on anyone who stands up to him.

During the course of the litigation I offered to pay Mr. Anderson the sum of £200, which I arranged to obtain, and which was the balance of all the money he had ever advanced me—on condition that he fulfilled his promise to take Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. That offer was rejected, with the addendum that he had never promised, either publicly or privately, to take such Shares. Subsequently I offered to have the whole matter submitted to a Committee of Honor. Mr. Anderson's solicitors acknowledged the receipt of my solicitors' letter, but no further reply was vouchsafed. He chose to sit tight on his technical advantage. He was quite willing to take my money, but not to take his Shares. And I was quite resolved that he should have no more of the one without the other.

Well now, I say that I tried to bring this matter to an honorable conclusion for both sides; and I failed, because Mr. Anderson took a perverse view of the matter, or because he was determined to do me all the injury he could. From what has been conveyed to me by some who have heard him speak on the subject, as well as from his action, I fancy the latter motive is the one that animates him. And as there is only one place where I have any property left—namely, my home—I expect very soon to see it invaded, and the war waged against my wife and children. With regard to the "dishonor," I have to say that I am indifferent to the opinion of the outside world. I am not of it, I do not contend for its prizes, I have never sought its smiles, and I treat its frowns with disdain.

It is enough for me to explain myself to the satisfaction of my own party; the party for which I have fought, and sacrificed, and suffered—the party to which I have given my life. To that party alone shall I ever address my vindication. And in that party I believe I have friends who will not see me financially crushed by a rich man, soured in his old age by the malicious tales of fair-seeming friends or jaundiced by his own misconceptions. To crush me in any other sense is impossible. I have my tongue and my pen still, I have my head with what is in it, and I have that in my heart which has held me erect in wild storms of adversity before, and will do so again. I know I am very far from perfect, and many faults have been laid to my charge, but my worst enemy never suggested that I was a coward.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THE London Freethinkers' Annual Excursion takes place to-day, and full particulars will be found in our advertisement columns. The special train starts at a convenient time in the morning for Box Hill and Dorking, and returns at an equally convenient hour in the evening. The return tickets are only 2s. for adults and 1s. for children under twelve. Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts, Mr. Cohen, Miss Vance, and other well-known Freethinkers, will join the excursion; and it is hoped that the train will be crowded with metropolitan "saints."

Those who have not got their tickets for the excursion beforehand will be able to obtain them outside Victoria and London Bridge Stations for half an hour or so prior to the starting of the train. We say *outside*, for the tickets must not be sold *inside*. Readers will please note this. Miss Vance will be at Victoria, and other well-known N. S. S. representatives at London Bridge.

The fourth Freethought Demonstration took place on Sunday evening in Hyde Park. Unfortunately, the weather was unpropitious. The rain, which had been threatening all day, began to fall a little soon after the meeting commenced. Mr. Davies made a brief introductory speech as chairman, and Mr. Cohen was brief in turn as the first speaker. Mr. Watts had about a quarter of an hour, and Mr. Foote, after speaking for a short time, had to wind up the proceedings, as the clerk of the weather was then in grim earnest. Other circumstances were also unfavorable. So many orators were holding forth at contiguous meetings within earshot that it was quite a Babel. The West London Branch members were for the most part conspicuous by their absence, and one or two who were there were engaged in promoting rival Freethought meetings. To add to the unpleasantness, the large new platform had broken down in the morning, and the miserable little thing available in the evening was not high enough to raise the speakers where they could command the audience; indeed, it was impossible to see them a few yards from the centre of the meeting. Perhaps it will be better, on a future occasion, to take the brake down to the old Reformers' Tree, and submit to other disadvantages for the sake of peace and comfort.

Mr. E. Treharne-Jones still assails superstition in South Wales as opportunity offers. On Saturday evening, June 29, he took part in a public debate with Mr. D. J. Jones on the question, "Is the Bible a Composition of Mythology?" We are informed that Mr. Treharne-Jones acquitted himself in a masterly manner. His opponent, on the other hand, who is a Wesleyan local preacher, showed himself very imperfectly acquainted with the subject, and was quite unable to follow the "infidel" as he traced several Biblical stories to their mythological sources.

The Manchester Branch picnic takes place next Sunday (July 14). The party will go to Hebden Bridge for Hardcastle Crags by the train leaving Victoria Station at 11 a.m. The return fare is 2s. 6d. Ample accommodation will be found for refreshment. A fine day is hoped for, and a strong rally of the local "saints."

Mr. H. Percy Ward had two more fine meetings at Newcastle-on-Tyne on Sunday. There was a good sale of literature too, and thousands of tracts and bills advertising the *Freethinker* were distributed.

Freethinkers all over the country are reminded that the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, needs and deserves their support. They will see from an article in this week's *Freethinker* that the present moment is extremely

opportune, if they have any intention at all of supporting this enterprise. Those who believe in the Company's objects, and especially in the value of this journal, should rally to its assistance at this juncture.

Monaca.

(From the Italian.)

ONE by one! How pale a tide outrolls!
The child-nuns passing, tear-bedewed,
Murmuring a prayer subdued
For all dead souls.

Shadowed in feathery veil,
Like doves from some far nest;
Counting the clouds to rest
That thither sail.

"Tell me, child so chaste, and bent
Beneath the sullen incubus of sorrow:
In golden dreams of childhood's morrow,
Hath never Love a tremor lent?"

"I dreamed of children, flowers that bloomed eternal
The softer solace of a mother's breast.
I dreamed of dances, kisses! The black priest
Menaced me with fire infernal,—

"*Vade retro!*" cried. 'Thou art condemned;
None e'er shall kiss thy modest lip.
This world's a demon-driven ship
On a sea without an end.'

"And they have buried me from ray of ruth
Within this grave-like monast'ry,
To live and die
Under the plumes of the eternal truth.

"He was fair, in godlike beauty moulded.
May I forget his lips that vain did sigh
That day I bade him evermore good-bye,
And convent portals swift his form enfolded.

"Flower of my life thou'rt passing so—unseen,
A poor crushed violet,
Forgotten, desolate,
And for the love that might have been.

"Love! kisses! Oh, my heart is tired!
I'll tear the tonac from his face;
And, closely locked in love's embrace,
We two will find alone our paradise!"

GEORGE WOODWARD.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held on Thursday, June 27; the President in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. E. Bater, W. Beech, C. Cohen, J. Cooper, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, B. Munton, J. Neate, C. Quinton, H. J. Stace, T. Thurlow, G. J. Warren, T. Wilmot, C. Watts, F. Wood.

This being the first meeting of the new Executive, the Conference Agenda was considered, and resolution No. 17, moved by the President—viz., "That the Executive be instructed to consider and report upon the whole question of Branches, subscriptions, and membership, with a view to securing an increased revenue and a more satisfactory list of adherents"—was discussed, and a sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. E. Bater, T. Wilmot, and J. Neate, were elected to inquire and report upon the matter. Three new members were elected for the West London Branch and three for the parent Society. Permission was given for the formation of new Branches at Coventry and Ridley-road. Messrs. Warren, Roger, Bater, Quay, and Stace were re-elected as a Benevolent Fund Committee for the ensuing year, and Messrs. Munton and Leat as monthly auditors.

The President made a statement concerning the attitude of the executors of the late S. Hartmann, Esq., and it was resolved that he (the President) should proceed with the matter in the manner he suggested.

It was also resolved that a Children's Outdoor Excursion be arranged for in September.

Other minor matters of business were discussed, and the meeting adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE.

The King's coronation oath is to be modified, if Parliament accepts the recommendation of the committee appointed to consider the matter. His Majesty will damn the Roman Catholics without swearing at them. That is about the substance of it.

Correspondence.

MORALITY AND ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Kingham says that I make "a great mistake" in stating that he either denies, or expects us to deny, moral responsibility. But he repeatedly argues, or asserts, that "morality stands or falls by the existence of a supernatural sanction." Therefore, if he is an Atheist, he denies moral responsibility; and if he is not an Atheist, he expects us to accept the argument or assertion which denies us a moral sense. That he does expect us to accept this argument is shown by the further fact that he asks us to recognise an alleged Secular inconsistency, when such recognition of inconsistency depends absolutely on our prior admission of the alleged destruction of moral responsibility under Atheism.

A succeeding statement calmly assumes that, because I did not know whether my opponent was Atheist or Christian, I had no right to deny any statements he might make concerning the alternative positions involved. The ineffable silliness of this idea is such that for a long time I charitably presumed that some slip or mistake had occurred, and that Mr. Kingham could not mean what he said.

The bearing of the succeeding accusation flung at me in the form of a question was for a time so obscure and perplexing, to others as well as to myself, that discussion with friends whose help I sought failed to solve the mystery of its meaning. Of the two possible interpretations then suggested I now see that neither was right. We failed because we were looking for a *rational* meaning, which was about the last thing we ought to have expected. Avoiding such misleading expectations, and taking Mr. Kingham's taunting question as it stands, the assumption in it is that any "professor" of Atheism—even Mr. Kingham himself, so long as he can pass himself off as a possible Atheist—has the right to "determine the contrast" between Atheistic and Christian doctrine, and that other Atheists, such as myself, have no right to object to the presentment of Atheism put forth by the pretended or possible Atheist. The idea expressed is simply a repetition of the almost incredibly ridiculous assumption embodied in Mr. Kingham's preceding remark, which I now see he fully intended. Mr. Kingham, or any other man, has, of course, every right to proclaim his own opinions as *his own*; but to allow any such person to father his statements on Atheism (or Secularism, or evolution, or science), and to admit his claim that such statements shall then be unchallengeable, would place Atheism at the mercy of any indiscreet Atheist and of any hypocritical Christian masquerading as an Atheist.

Mr. Kingham begins his second paragraph with the assertion that he certainly did not imply that the determinism of the Secularist has any connection whatever with moral irresponsibility. But the matter hinged upon this point more than upon any other; and if Mr. Kingham does not see this, he fails to understand or to remember the tenor of his own remarks. He represented Mr. Watts, for instance, as vainly "trying to reconcile morality with the Secular position that men's actions are determined by natural law." He contrasted the moral merits of "Christianity, in claiming man to be a free agent," with the supposed demerits of Secularism, which holds that man's actions are determined by natural causation. He says that "the possession of a free will is the only element which can go to constitute him a moral and responsible agent." I fail to see the use of arguing with a disputant who is so blindly oblivious of the substance and purport of his own remarks.

That my opponent upholds the free-will doctrine in its extreme and absurdest form is seen in his third paragraph, where he says that to use the phrase "caused volitions" would be to "perpetrate a paradox." He thus commits himself absolutely to the belief in "uncaused volitions." He must hold that the great natural law of cause and effect is totally abrogated in one extremely important province of nature. He must maintain that the decisions of our will arise independently of causation, or without causes or motives—a doctrine which, if true, would make man a more irresponsible and unmanageable being than the wildest lunatic, since his actions could not be influenced or determined or foreseen in the slightest degree. It is Mr. Kingham's doctrines that would destroy moral responsibility, while Secularism affirms and explains such responsibility.

"Caused volition," I may observe, is by no means the absurdity it appears to my opponent, who makes it the equivalent of "involuntary volition," which he assumes to be a contradiction in terms, and therefore an impossibility. If by high wages I induce a man to work for me, his volition is "caused," but it certainly cannot rightly be described as "involuntary." "Caused volition" is therefore *not* the same thing as "involuntary volition." On the other hand, if I induced the man to work for me by threats of shooting or starving him, his volition might fairly be described as "involuntary volition." Such "involuntary volition" is perfectly possible. There is no self-contradiction or paradox in the actual meanings of the words, but only in their outward form.

I must confess, or complain, that I find very great difficulty in dealing satisfactorily with letters like those to which

I am now replying. The statements they contain are often crude or irrelevant, or are unintelligible puzzles destitute of perceptible logical point. Much of the matter is padding of a more or less doubtful character. Many of the assertions I could not accept without correction; and if I accepted the responsibility of such correction I should lay myself open to charges of misrepresentation.

To some of the more intelligible of Mr. Kingham's crude assertions I should have to give a distinct denial, as, for instance, where he declares that "natural selection teaches (*sic*) that those organisms which benefit in the struggle for existence are never benefitted except by a corresponding injury to others." But the struggle is largely against natural hardships, and an animal is improved to meet them quite independently of "corresponding injury" to any other animal. Mutual adaptation, or even co-operation, is often brought about by natural selection, as between the bee and the flower, to the injury of neither and the benefit of both. To say that natural selection *never* benefits organisms except by inflicting corresponding injury on other organisms is distinctly untrue.

Other statements are so bewilderingly paradoxical that I feel incapable of understanding them without first inviting a preliminary attack of lunacy. Mr. Kingham, for instance, declares that, "according to evolution, to be one thing is to be nothing"; and that "the cause is the effect in analysis; the effect is the cause in synthesis."

So far as I can judge, his main arguments or assertions appear to be long-winded reiterations in slightly varied forms of the charges against which I protested, and to which I replied, in my previous letter. They are based on the ridiculously perverse idea that the secular or scientific view of the universe must logically exclude moral responsibility. This is far from being the case. The actual fact is that the inevitable laws and blind forces of Nature *produce* and *maintain* moral responsibility. In proof of this I referred my opponent to Darwin's purely scientific and purely secular account of the evolution of the moral sense. If he does not care to study and understand so instructive a teacher of the world as Darwin, he must not expect me to undertake the laborious trouble involved in the exceedingly tedious and unprofitable task of attempting to follow and understand his own bewildering compositions.

The fact is, that the missing link in such arguments as those I am dealing with—namely, the logical link needed to connect natural laws of causation with absence of moral responsibility—is supplied by mere assumption become habitual, and therefore regarded as axiomatic. Certain minds build up their own theory of moral responsibility on supernaturalism as a basis; and they allow themselves to be so wrapped in their own interpretation of moral responsibility that they are totally unable to perceive or admit that other minds (such as Darwin's, to wit) build up *their* interpretation and explanation of moral responsibility on a purely natural basis. Such supernaturalistic moralists adopt foolish notions concerning the nature of volition, choice, free agency, etc., and then think that continual re-statement of their own illogical and unscientific opinions is all that is necessary to demolish a scientific view which they appear to be incapable of comprehending. They fall into a man-trap themselves, and think that everybody else is bound to follow their example.

W. P. BALL.

He and She.

HE.

If I were Pierpont Morgan
And you were Hetty Green,
We'd corner all the bowers,
We'd make the sunshine ours,
And I would crown you queen
Upon a throne of flowers,
If I were Pierpont Morgan
And you were Hetty Green.

SHE.

If you were Pierpont Morgan
And I were Hetty Green,
In dismal days and sunny
We'd just keep making money
And stacking it between
Our happy selves, my honey,
If you were Pierpont Morgan
And I were Hetty Green.

—Chicago Record Herald.

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